

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

August 31, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Following is a report of a meeting with Mrs. Shih at the Chinese Mission in New York on August 30, 1972.

I entered the Chinese Mission at 1700 hours, where I was greeted by Mrs. Shih and escorted to a room on the second floor. Mrs. Shih served tea and a twenty-minute discussion on non-substantial matters followed.

After approximately twenty-five minutes, Mrs. Shih mentioned that the Ambassador was unavoidably detained and would not be able to join us. I then presented the note (Tab A) to Mrs. Shih, who read it and said she understood it, had no questions and would pass it to the Ambassador as soon as possible.

Mrs. Shih then guided the conversation back to generalities and served a second pot of tea.

I departed the Mission at 1755 and telephoned Colonel Kennedy to advise him that the note had been delivered.


V. James Fazio
Deputy Director
Situation Room

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

Attached for the information of the Chinese side is a copy of the further report, which the U.S. side mentioned on August 28, 1972, concerning the August 22, 1972 incident.

The U.S. side expresses once again its sincere regret for the loss of life resulting from this matter. It will do its utmost to prevent recurrence, but wishes to point out that the activities involved run the risk of inadvertent and regrettable incidents.

SUBJECT: PRC Protest Over the Sinking of a Small Waterborne
Logistic Craft on 22 August 1972

1. An investigation has been conducted of a PRC protest over the sinking of an alleged PRC lifeboat in the vicinity of Hon Ngu Island on 22 August 1972. The investigation included personal interview of the pilots by the Commanding Officer, Oriskany, photos of Hung Chi 151 on 25 August 1972 and comments from Commanding Officer USS Truxton whose ship was controlling the two A-7 aircraft involved. The principal elements disclosed by this investigation were:

a. The movements and nature of the craft attacked coincided with the movements and nature of many other waterborne logistic craft noted in the past. These craft have been attacked and destroyed because they are engaged in transporting supplies from merchant ships at Hon Ngu anchorage into the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

b. The location of the boat at the time of the bombing was approximately 1500 feet from the nearest merchant ship. An A-7 flight requested permission from the USS Truxton to attack the boat. Truxton authorized expending ordnance against the boat only after the pilots twice checked for presence of flag and reported back there was no flag. Although the PRC alleges the boat was a "lifeboat," the aircrews report several boxes or crates were observed in the boat. Based on this observation, it was concluded that supplies were being carried by the North Vietnamese from the northern merchant ship. The boat was sunk with one 500 lb. bomb dropped from an A-7.

c. 25 August photography reveals that Hung Chi is missing one of the two small boats normally carried aft. Photography on 19 August had both boats in place. It may be surmised from this information and from the correlation of boat sizes, that the boat which was sunk could have been from the Hung Chi 151.

d. According to the PRC, the boat was sunk at 18°47'56"; 105°45'12"; the A-7 flight reported the position as 18°47'45", 105°45'. The two positions differ only 1100' in their north-south orientation. It is noted that this position is approximately one-third of the distance from shore line to Hon Ngu Island -- another indication to the aircrew that the boat was carrying supplies.

2. To summarize: The boat appeared to be carrying supplies; it was near shore according to both PRC and aircrew reports; it was not flying a flag; two low level identification passes were made to ascertain the boat's mission. The attack was initiated in accordance with the formally proclaimed intention of the United States to prevent the delivery of seaborne supplies to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.